David Arbo Spirituality/Service Reflection as a member of the Mary Queen of Peace Habitat for Humanity ministry

The Habitat for Humanity organization leads people in the fight against homelessness for poor people the world over. This agency illustrates my personal values and mission as well as those of St. Scholastica Academy. Aiding a social cause by volunteering in the community enriches both my personal and professional life as a member of God’s world. I feel it is imperative that all people give of themselves to those around them who are less fortunate. As stated in the Luke’s Gospel, “To those whom much is given, much is required.” Certainly Americans have been blessed with bountiful riches and particularly those of us who live in the Northshore communities. This philosophy is one of my rules to live by which I relate to SSA students whenever possible. Although my area of teaching expertise is in the field of science I firmly believe that I am bound to include this and other spiritual messages in the daily activities of my classroom. I also have many opportunities to preach this philosophy outside of the academic realm through my participation in student activities such as retreats and outreach days.

The mission of Habitat is to provide “decent, affordable housing for all, eliminating poverty housing and homelessness from the world”. Habitat for Humanity was founded in 1976, and has since built and rehabilitated more than 125,000 homes. Habitat has sheltered more than 625,000 people in more than 3,000 communities around the world. There are more than 1,900 Habitat affiliates in 83 countries (http://www.habitat.org). It is a nonprofit, Christian housing ministry that uses volunteer labor and donations of money and materials to build decent housing. Local affiliates, which may be church or community groups, are responsible for the homes built within their community. They coordinate all fundraisers, site selections, family selections, and construction for each building project undertaken in the area. Families in need of decent housing apply to the local affiliate and are chosen by a selection committee. Families are chosen based on their level of need, willingness to be a partner in the organization, and ability to repay the no-interest loan. Partner families pay monthly mortgage payments financed by no-interest loans and must contribute hundreds of hours of labor to building homes for other families. The mortgage payments paid are used to build the houses for other families.

By relying on donations and volunteer labor Habitat has built hundreds of homes. True spirituality values being able to help others better their lives and Habitat uses this as the means to their battle against inadequate housing. Habitat also reflects the idea that charity works best people are willing to help themselves. The organization doesn’t just give away houses; it requires that families be willing to become partners in the cause, helping not only with their own home but the homes of others as well. Partner families are looking to better their lives, and willing to help themselves; therefore, they are served best by the help of others. Many families are in dire conditions because of factors that are out of their control, but with a willingness to help themselves and accept aid from others they can better their lives, and I value being able to be part of this process.